

price of health care for businesses, for our farmers, for everybody is also very much a part of what we passed to lower prices by getting more competition with generic drugs, opening the border to Canada to bring lower prices, giving States more flexibility.

I wonder if the Senator will comment on the fact that the Senate has passed this very important bill, sent it to the House, and it has received no action this fall. We have nothing yet in committee. We have not seen the President speaking out about the fact we passed a bill that will actually lower prices, bring more competition, address the fact that our seniors and our families are having to struggle right now—in fact, right now, as we are here, there are people who are watching C-SPAN 2 saying: Do I eat today or buy my medicine?

We had a bill which passed the Senate. We would greatly appreciate the President's leadership in encouraging the House of Representatives to pass this bill this fall. We could dramatically lower prices immediately with the passage of that bill.

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Michigan, first, let me acknowledge—and I am sure my colleagues know as well—Senator STABENOW has been a leader on the issue of prescription drugs. She has been tenacious. Thank goodness she has been. She took a bus trip to Canada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the majority leader has expired. Twenty-eight minutes remain on the other side.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that until someone comes from the other side, we be allowed to use that time. The minute someone's head pops in that door, we will quit. In the meantime, there seems to be no need to have the Senate voiceless.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from Nevada.

The point the Senator from Michigan makes is an important one. We did pass a prescription drug bill. It was not what we wanted. We wanted a voluntary program under Medicare which would be universal and available for all Americans so they could get the benefits of Medicare when it came to prescription drugs.

We could not convince our Republican friends to go along with us on that, but we did pass a bill in terms of generic drugs to reduce costs for all families across America, to let States come up with their own plans so they could find ways to reduce costs for all the citizens in their State, as well as the safe reimportation of drugs from countries that have much lower costs. Those are three good issues, but do not forget the fourth.

Senator ROCKEFELLER's amendment provides that \$6 billion, on an emergency basis, will be given for Medicaid to States facing high unemployment.

These States have cut back in reimbursements to providers and hospitals. My State is one of them—I bet the State of Michigan is too—and that \$6 billion would come back to the States right now. It would help them keep hospitals open and provide basic health care.

We cannot get the House of Representatives to consider that legislation. Now they are talking about dropping everything and coming up with a resolution on Iraq. Why is it they can drop everything for a resolution on Iraq, but cannot drop everything, when it comes to prescription drugs, to move the issue forward?

Our bill is there. It is pending. It would be a help to all families across America, not just the families of senior citizens.

I say to the Senator from Michigan, we have to keep reminding the President and the Republican leadership that there are many issues in this country, not the least of which is good quality health care for everyone.

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the Senator yields, may I ask one more question?

Mr. DURBIN. Of course.

Mr. REID. What the Senator said is we can focus on Iraq and that there are many issues the President can help us on: Getting appropriations bills passed in the House would help us; doing something on election reform—we had another debacle in Florida 2 years after the original debacle; we passed a bill and are waiting to get that out of conference. We have the energy bill we need to get out of conference with the House. There is terrorism insurance, bankruptcy—am I missing anything?—generic drugs. That is one issue about which the Senator from Illinois and I did not talk.

Mr. DURBIN. Patients' Bill of Rights.

Mr. REID. Patients' Bill of Rights. There are so many issues with which we need to deal in the Congress that the President can help us with if we were not on the one track of Iraq.

It seems to me—and one can read about this in the editorial pages every day—that the President could be doing this to divert attention from these domestic issues. Has the Senator read some of those comments, I say to my friend from Illinois?

Mr. DURBIN. I have read the speculation. I do not buy it. I do not believe it, but the point I am trying to make in the course of this—and I think we all are—is that the President has made progress. The United Nations is moving forward. Inspections are going to be ordered. Saddam Hussein has agreed to them. That is real progress. I salute the President for that progress.

What I am now saying is, let's focus on America and some of the things we need to do to win the economic war in this country. I am asking for a very

small pledge of time from the White House to focus on these economic issues that face our country. We can do both. The United States can defend itself, fight a war on terrorism, keep a watchful eye on Iraq and still be worried about the issues that American families in Nevada, Illinois, and Delaware think about every day: What about my job? What about my pension? How am I going to pay for that health insurance? Can we pay for these prescription drugs? Is Social Security really in good shape for years to come?

These are real gut-wrenching issues for real families. I think it is a responsibility of the White House to get beyond the agenda they have focused on for the last several weeks and open it up to new issues and new concerns that are universal across America.

We talked about education. Kids are back in school, and there is a lot of concern about whether our schools have the quality teachers they need, whether the kids are going to get the education they deserve. We have to put money back in education. We have to focus on making certain we have after-school programs for kids who need a special helping hand, smaller class sizes—something we pushed for in the past—make sure teachers are paid as the professionals they are. These are real needs.

When we talk about filling real needs, I do not want to overlook in health care a shortage in nursing. I would like the White House to give us 15 minutes this week or next week with an idea for the agenda of having more nurses in America. This is a serious shortcoming in health care in the United States. Hospitals have reduced their number of beds; nursing and convalescent homes, the same, for one simple reason: There are not enough nurses.

We need an initiative, a national leadership. I hope the President will not ignore this. When you listen to the agenda we could be considering, it is substantial, but it gets to the heart of the real issues about which Americans are concerned. I sincerely hope we move on that and move on it quickly. We owe it to the American people.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DOING THE SENATE'S WORK

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I know Senators are just getting back into town from the Jewish holiday yesterday. And I hope we can make the most of this week. We have a lot to do, on the Interior appropriations bill as well as on the issue of homeland security.

As our colleagues are aware, this afternoon we will have a cloture vote on the Byrd amendment. I reluctantly filed that cloture vote last week because we are now in the third week of debate on the Interior appropriations bill as well as on homeland security. With all of the work that must be done and with all of the issues we must address, we simply cannot prolong this debate indefinitely.

Seventy-nine Senators a couple of weeks ago voted for an amendment offered by the distinguished Senator from Montana, myself, and others responding to the crisis we now face in drought-stricken parts of the country. The regions of the country which are experiencing drought are growing—the Southeast, the Midwest, and the far West—areas throughout the country that have experienced drought conditions, and in some cases it is unprecedented.

We also have a very serious situation with regard to firefighting, so serious that this administration changed its position from one which said we will not provide any new resources for firefighting—that all firefighting moneys that ought to be dedicated to firefighting this fall be taken from the Forest Service budget. They changed from that position to say, we now recognize how serious this situation is, and we will commit \$850 million and ask the Congress to support it.

You have two very important priorities in dealing with disaster and crisis: One with the Forest Service and firefighting needs. This is urgent. This is extraordinarily important to the ongoing effort to fight fires throughout the country, especially again in the West. And, second, as I noted, the drought.

We have voted for this legislation. We have gone on record on a bipartisan basis in support of this legislation. I know there are those who still would like to work out other compromises relating to other issues, and if that can be done, I certainly will welcome it.

But we simply cannot go on week after week after week without more notable progress, without more of a tangible way with which to address these needs, and, secondly, without a way to recognize that we have a lot of work to do in a very short period of time. We have what amounts to about 15 legislative days left prior to the time we adjourn for the year. I am troubled, to say the least, by the extraordinary list of items that have to be addressed and the very minimal amount of time legislatively we have to address them.

I come to the floor this morning urging colleagues on both sides of the aisle to recognize the need, to recognize the urgency, to recognize the shortness of legislative time available, and to recognize how important it is that we move on to accomplish as much as we possibly can in a very short period of time.

I can only hope we will get a good vote this afternoon—I would like it to

be unanimous—on cloture, so at least on this particular amendment we have the opportunity to move on to other issues, and hopefully to a time for final passage on the Interior appropriations bill.

I will have more to say about homeland security later on in the day, but I must say, this is something that just begs our support, recognizing the prioritization it deserves as we consider the schedule and the need that is so clearly a recognition around the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, the majority leader makes a very good point. I am struck by what we are debating off the floor, which is timber health. At the heart of that is how we deal with judicial appeals, which has brought a new dynamic to that debate on forest health and how we manage our public lands; that is, not a denial of judicial appeals, but also in the area of timber restraining orders.

People can file appeals—we do not want to deny that—but also how we deal with the decision-rendering process, which does cause some concern with folks using timber restraining orders as a tool in the process to get their way. Basically, that is what we have here.

We are on a time line, if we go off this. Those who do not want to see anything move press us into a time line, and then we go on home knowing there is a timeframe on that debate.

Given the time we have and the leader's decision to double-track these two issues in order to facilitate and deal with these issues in a short time line, we have to take a look at that. I know the leader is. I congratulate him for his push on this and to make it a reality. But so far, it hasn't come to be and does not get us to where I think we want to be before we go home in October. We want to move forward as fast as we can.

But also there is lingering debate out there that a lot of folks are concerned about—especially on our forests. I want to bolster the leader's contention that drought relief and disaster relief in farm and ranch country are still with us. Just on Sunday past—here we are in the middle of September with football in the air—it was 92 degrees in Billings, MT. The Yellowstone River is as low as I have ever seen it. Above the Bighorn River where it spills into the Yellowstone, you can walk across that river just about anywhere and not get your knees wet. We still have that concern.

The leader is right. It passed this body overwhelmingly. It should be allowed to move forward with the apparatus in front of us in which to get that relief out to our people who are suffering at this time. I appreciate his leadership on that.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 5093, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5093) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2003, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Byrd amendment No. 4472, in the nature of a substitute.

Byrd amendment No. 4480 (to amendment No. 4472), to provide funds to repay accounts from which funds were borrowed for emergency wildfire suppression.

Craig/Domenici amendment No. 4518 (to amendment No. 4480), to reduce hazardous fuels on our national forests.

Dodd amendment No. 4522 (to amendment No. 4472), to prohibit the expenditure of funds to recognize Indian tribes and tribal nations until the date of implementation of certain administrative procedures.

Byrd/Stevens amendment No. 4532 (to amendment No. 4472), to provide for critical emergency supplemental appropriations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I would like to speak directly to the issues raised both by the majority leader and the Senator from Montana; specifically, with respect to how we are going to resolve issues related to the health of our forests.

I know the discussion has greatly focused on fires and the catastrophic results of fires this year. I am going to talk about that to a great extent. But I would like to make a point at the very beginning which I hope we don't lose sight of; that is, fire is merely one component of the problem we have to deal with. What we are really talking about is the health of our forests, both for the protection of people from catastrophic wildfires and also for the ecological benefits that a healthy forest provides. It provides wonderful recreation for our citizens. It provides habitat for all of the flora and fauna we not only like to visit and like to see but to understand that it is very important for ecological balance in our country. It protects endangered species. It provides a home for all of the other fish, insects, birds, mammals, and reptiles we would like to protect, whether they are endangered or not.

In order to have this kind of healthy forest, we have come to a conclusion, I think pretty much unanimously in this country, that we are going to have to manage the forest differently than we have in the past.

What the debate is all about is how the Congress is going to respond to this emergency, not just from the catastrophic wildfires but from the other